

The Muslim Sunrise



2002

82nd Year of Publication

Issue 3

Islam: a Religion of Peace and Love

by Imam I.H. Kauser

More and more pious souls,
spanning 175 countries by now,
are supporting anti-terrorist Islam
by joining the fold of
Ahmadiyyat, the true Islam.

Statistics for the last 10 years speak out loud!

1993	204,308
1994	421,753
1995	847,725
1996	1,602,721
1997	3,004,585
1998	5,004,591
1999	10,820,226
2000	41,308,975
2001	81,006,721
2002	20,654,000

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US\$2

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Muslim Sunrise

A Journal of the Islamic Renaissance in America

The Muslim Sunrise is a journal of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc., U.S.A. The magazine is open for discussions on Islam and topics relating to other religions. It highlights the role of Islam in a changing environment. It provides a platform for public opinion on current issues and their solutions. Opinions expressed in the magazine may not necessarily be those of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

The Muslim Sunrise was founded in 1921 by Dr Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957), the first Ahmadi Muslim missionary in the U.S.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was founded in 1889 by *Hadrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (1835-1908), peace be on him. It is presently headed by *Hadrat* Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the fourth successor to the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, may Allah be his support.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the US is headed by *Dr. Ahsan Zafar*.

Address all inquiries to Editor

The Muslim Sunrise, 15000 Good Hope Rd, Silver Spring, MD, 20905

Phone: 301 879-0110, Fax: 301 879-0115

Editors:

Syed Sajid Ahmad

Dr. Rasheed S. Azam

Dr. Shanaz Butt

Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa

Shamim A. Azam

Bushra Salam Bajwa

Arshed M. Khan

Al-Haj Dhul-Waqar Yaqub

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Dr Wajeeh Bajwa, Muslim Sunrise Subscription Dept.

PO Box 1057, Cary, NC 27512-1057

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Review of Religions

Review of Religions is a publication of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. The object of this monthly magazine is to educate, enlighten and inform readers on religious, social, economic and political issues with particular emphasis on Islam. *In publication for over a hundred years*, this magazine sheds light upon news dealing with contemporary issues with reason, rationality and religious teachings.

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Muslim Sunrise and the World Lose a Great Benefactor

Sahibzadah M.M. Ahmad passed away on July 22 at the age of 89.

Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un

Sahibzadah Mirza Muzaffar Ahmad was a son of Hadrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad, may Allah be pleased with him, who in turn was a son of the Promised Messiah, peace be on him.

His services were indispensable to the progress of Pakistan. His intellect and selfless service took him through the ranks of administration to ultimately become the president's Economic Advisor. He was also trusted to be the Acting President of Pakistan at one time.

He would have contributed to the future of Pakistan much more if the rulers of Pakistan had not sacrificed the well being of Pakistan to appease the mulla for political convenience. By ignoring such selfless servants, successive rulers broke the basic Islamic principles of equity and fairness, thus bringing to the country despair after despair, leading to the present-day chaos and turmoil.

As the head of the Ahmadiyya community in the US, he supervised the publication of the Muslim Sunrise. He reviewed every issue before its publication, and from time to time, he provided valuable suggestions, advice, and guidance.

His advice with respect to the Muslim Sunrise helped improve its quality and effectiveness. He read all the correspondence with attention to detail, investigated the matter thoroughly, and wrote valuable remarks back.

He was 76 years old when he was given the grand responsibility of heading the Ahmadiyya community in the US in 1989. His administrative experience proved to be a great asset in contributing to the success and progress of the Ahmadiyya community in the US. His accomplishments at that advanced age are an excellent example to follow and a necessary lesson to learn for all to serve our community selflessly up to our last breaths.

May Allah bless and exalt his soul and be a source of solace for his near ones. Amin.

Every year, more and more pious souls, are supporting anti-terrorist Islam by joining the fold of Ahmadiyyat, the true Islam.

Every year, Ahmadi Muslims from all over the world gather around their leader, worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya community in Islam, for their international gathering, known as Jalsa Salana. These gatherings have been held in the Ahmadiyya community since 1991. The initial venue was the small town of Qadian in India until the separation of the subcontinent into two countries, India and Pakistan, in 1947. Pakistan hosted its last such gathering at Rabwah in 1983 with more than 300,000 in attendance. The head of the Ahmadiyya community had to move to London in 1984 in the face of mounting religious persecution in Pakistan backed by the unfortunate ruler of that era. The annual international gathering moved with him to Europe. These three-day gatherings are held during summer mostly in London.

One prominent feature of these gathering for the last decade has been the international initiation ceremony (Ālami Bai'at). Every year, the head of the community, *Hadrat* Mirza Tahir Ahmad, may Allah strengthen him with His mighty support, announces the count of new additions to the fold of Islam through the selfless efforts of the Ahmadi Muslims all over the world during the preceding 12 months. He also mentions incidents of heavenly guidance and support generating these initiates. The counts of new initiates appear on the cover of this issue for the past decade showing the incessant spread of the non-terrorist Ahmadiyya Muslim Islam, proclaiming loud the slogan of "Love for all, hatred for none."

At this ceremony, representatives of the new initiates from all over the world recite the pledge of initiation at his hand in their own languages. The representatives come from all corners of the world, from all races and nationalities. The gathering presents an unmatched picture of universal brotherhood taught by Islam, and the numbers present a glimpse of the awaited worldwide spread and victory of the Islamic message of peace and harmony through the followers of the *Hadrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (Guide) of the age, peace be on him.

Islam: a Religion of Peace and Love

by Imam I.H. Kauser

Baitul Hameed Mosque, Chino, California, USA

Mankind today is in the midst of one of the greatest crises in history. It is a crisis of life-threatening magnitude that pits the two extremes of man's spiritual and moral capacities against each other in what can rightly be called a battle between Good and Evil; a battle whose outcome will affect us all—not just the poor, unfortunate victims we see in the news in places like Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The key to winning this battle within ourselves, and within our societies, lies in empowering the Good within each of us so we may strive in righteousness for peace and harmony, as opposed to allowing the potential for Evil within us to breed hatred and tear us apart and make us enemies of one another.

These two states can be seen clearly in the two qualities of Love and Fear. When we love our neighbors, goodness and peace flow from us to them as easily as a smile. When we fear our neighbors, then animosity and evil are the inevitable fruits of such fear.

All true Guidance from God always seeks to bring about, within our hearts and between ourselves, a love and peace that can bring us harmony in our worldly life and spiritual communion with the Almighty. By no means can this peace and communion ever be achieved through fear, hatred, violence or oppression.

All true forms of Guidance seek to raise mankind from his animal instincts and animosities into the divinely-inspired realization that all people are the Children of one God. And while our philosophers and prophets admonish us that we all are the creation of God, man excels at first dividing his fellow beings into colors, nations, creeds and religions, and then judging one man superior or inferior to another according to his own jealous or fearful measure.

We have been created from God's love for us so that we may become the image of God's love among ourselves. Yet, we rush forth, blind and heedless, into the abyss of our low desires and worldly temptations, seeking only what satiates the senses and keeps our fears at bay.

Throughout the history of mankind and the advent of the major world religions, the pressing need has always been the same—to save people from spiritual death and grant them a life of heaven on earth as well as paradise in the Hereafter. This is why God has always raised up from among the righteous and God-fearing, prophets to lead their people out of sin and away from the ways of evil and death. These righteous prophets then become our examples of spiritual success and triumph in the face of worldly trials and opposition.

Would not God want us to reach the highest pinnacle of our spiritual perfection in this life? Would He not then also provide for us the Guidance and Prophet to explain it and be its best example and model?

We, as Muslims, believe that yes, this is exactly what God wants for all of us, and that God, Who always keeps His promises, fulfilled the promises He made in all the previous Holy scriptures by sending the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) with the Qur'an—a word meaning “that which is most widely read and recited.”

It the duty of Muslims to strive with our words and deeds to emulate the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to bring about peace in the world. But how can we do this in the face of Western opinion that Islam is a religion of terrorism and hate, and in an atmosphere where Muslims are feared and despised? How can this hatred be changed into love? Can the peace of Islam change this world into a place of peace? Can this world truly be changed from the torment of hell into heavenly bliss? We must always strive for this and not lose hope or sight of this noble goal.

The beauty of Islam is that it not only promises that we can attain this peace in the world today, but that it has been proven to be attainable in the past, during the Golden Ages of the Muslim world. The evidence for this can be found in the peace, prosperity, culture, science and civilization witnessed by the history of the Islamic empires in the Near East and Mid-East, Asia, India, Africa and Spain.

On an individual as well as a social level, the attainment of this reality lies in realizing we all are God's creation, and that God has endowed us with the capacity to understand and follow His Divine Scriptures. He has gifted us with intelligence and all the resources to live in peace with one another, should we so strive to do so. And as Muslims, we are, in fact, so commanded by Allah in the Holy Qur'an.

And the amity that is possible between the world's different faiths resides like a hidden blossom in the fact that all religions originally came from the same source. Each religion before Islam provided appropriate guidance to its followers when and as it was needed, until the overall spiritual development of Mankind was such that it was ready to comprehend and put into practice a complete and universal guidance. It is this Guidance that Allah promised and delivered through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

Islam unites all mankind into one brotherhood. Islam means peace and also submission to the Will of God. The way to attain peace today (as was in all previous ages) is to submit to the Will of God, following His commandments to establish communion with Him, which results in peace with God and peace with humanity.

Islam, from its very inception 1400 years ago, proclaimed that its Guidance was meant for all, without any distinction or discrimination. Islam not only teaches respect for other religions, it works to create affection towards Islam by other faiths by forbidding Muslims from denigrating the deities of other religions or destroying their icons.

Unfortunately, in the present day, Islam is the most misunderstood religion in the world. It is known in the West as the religion of a very few infamous individuals, like Khomeini, Saddam Hussain or Osama bin Laden—rather than the faith of almost one-and-a-half billion people all over the world.

Christians proclaim to their prospective converts only the high ideals and practices of its founder, Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), yet they seldom if ever present Islam as it was taught and lived by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) or as the Holy Qur'an itself defines it: "The religion of Abraham, the Upright, who was ever inclined to God." It is the Existence of this double standard of perspective and portrayal that calls for fairness and the right of Islam to present its true message and meaning.

In an article for Reader's Digest in the mid-1950s entitled "Islam, the Misunderstood Religion," the famous American writer James A. Michener makes the following point:

"One of the strangest facts in today's world is that Islam, a religion which in many ways is almost identical with Christianity and Judaism, should be so poorly

understood in America and Europe.”

Yet today, over half a century later—especially following the tragic events of September 11th, 2001—Islam is still the most misunderstood religion. In fact, an American news magazine poll in April 2002 revealed that 37 percent of those surveyed viewed Islam with “disapproval.” It’s clear where this attitude comes from, but is it fair to brand Muslims as terrorists or their religion as one that is rooted in a hatred of the West? Let’s consider a few facts:

There are 1.5 billion Muslims in more than 185 countries of the world. There are estimated to be 5-7 million Muslims just in America. There are approximately 75 million Muslims in China, and 80 million in the former states of the Soviet republic. And interestingly enough, according to recent statistics compiled by Christian researchers, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. The total number of Muslims in all denominations is expected to surpass the total number of adherents to all forms of Christianity by the year 2025, if not sooner. So the question these days and in light of the largely negative image of Islam and Muslims held by so many millions of non-Muslims around the world is this: Why is it gaining new converts—mostly from Christianity—even faster than before?

The answer is both rational and obvious to anyone who has taken the time to examine its history, its Prophet and its teachings with an open mind and a receptive heart: Islam is and always has been a religion of Love, Peace, Harmony and Brotherhood, free of color, class or social caste barriers. But unfortunately, the press, radio and television rarely present the true picture of Islam. Whether this is intentional or not is unknown, but the fact remains that “peaceful” Islam is not exactly newsworthy in a world where the violent and the sensational vie with one another on the news for the most viewers and ratings, whereas the “beautiful” face of Islam seldom garners either.

Islam as the presentation of the Western media almost invariably focuses on the actions and zealous doctrinal interpretations of those individuals or political groups who seek to advance their worldly agendas under the guise of Islam, as if the religion somehow sanctifies or condones their aberrant or violent behavior.

The media has, either ignorantly or intentionally, misrepresented Islamic teachings time and time again. But the facts are highly divergent from that misrepresentation. Historically, in nations and

countries where kingdoms and empires flourished under Islamic rule and protection, there was so much peace and progress, civility and scientific enlightenment, social and religious tolerance and harmony that these nations have not witnessed a similar era of peace and progress since then.

One need only read about the recognized centers of advanced learning and the havens of intellectual and religious freedom in the Islamic world to see how this tranquility lasted until only a few centuries ago.

The Holy Land

Jerusalem from the 7th to the 11th centuries enjoyed peace and religious harmony under Muslim government until the first Christian Crusaders arrived in 1099, ruthlessly killing 70,000 Muslim and Jewish men, women and children while burning the city to the ground. Less than a century later, in 1183, the Muslims regained control of Jerusalem under leadership of the famous Kurdish general Salahuddin without any bloody massacres of the innocent or the destruction of the city. In fact, the mayor of Jerusalem welcomed Salahuddin at the city gates and personally gave him a guided tour. Things soon returned to a state of relative peace under the restored Islamic government, and this peace reigned unbroken despite repeated attempts by Christian Crusaders over the ensuing four centuries to wage their "Holy War" against the Muslim "infidels" to re-liberate the Holy Land. The conflict we have witnessed in the area between the Muslims and the Jews spans just decades, not centuries. It is a tragic and wholly avertable stain on the long history of peaceful co-existence between these two cousins of the Abrahamic family line. Peace can reign again. How? Islam admonishes its followers to accept peace whenever it is offered, to always seek peace to end hostilities, and to never be the aggressors in a conflict. The Jewish religion teaches an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and regularly calls for the complete destruction of its enemies. How then can the peace process truly begin if the hearts of the recalcitrant and the prideful remain defiant against compromise or peace?

Spain

Muslims ruled southern Spain, known as Andalusia, for nearly 700 years until it fell to the armies of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand at

the end of the 15th century. Prior to that time, the names Cordoba, Toledo and Granada were synonymous with the world's best centers of education, culture, philosophy and freedom of art, expression and religion. The high-point of the Jews' cultural and religious freedom during this period was, by their own admission, only possible because of their protected status under the Islamic government in Andalusia.

After the 15th century, however, the country once famous for its religious tolerance and freedom of thought became infamous as the hunting ground of the Spanish Inquisition under the Holy Catholic Church and for the Church's merciless persecution of "heretics" and its other perceived enemies—especially the Jews.

The Middle East

Despite political strife in the Muslim world—the inevitable result of human beings' quest for wealth and power—Western historians and scholars have had to acknowledge the surprising stability of the Islamic civilizations in places like Egypt and Iraq, where the positive influence of Islam on the spiritual, moral and intellectual growth of its citizens could not be denied.

Baghdad in the 12th century boasted the Western world's only teaching hospital and a central library filled with over one million books—more than all the books in the entire country of France! The first detailed diagrams and description of diseases of the human eye came from Muslim doctors. Terms like alcohol, algebra and alchemy (chemistry) come from Arabic science.

Many technological advances in astronomy and navigation, like the astrolabe, came about due to Islam's encouragement of the open-minded and rational exploration of nature. Allah tells us repeatedly in the Holy Qur'an to investigate the world to understand its rules and discover its truths, so we may see His Design in the creation and thereby strengthen our faith.

Religion and science in Islam were never meant to be enemies to one another, although after the decline of Muslim civilization and the resurgence of Christian/Western colonialism 500 years ago, Islam's followers became very narrow-minded, dogmatic and unquestioning. Yet it never suffered the adversarial relationship forged by the Catholic Church towards its scholars and scientists such as Galileo, who was placed under house arrest and forced to recant his belief in the

Copernican idea that the sun—not the earth—was the center of our planetary system.

The Church did eventually apologize for its harsh treatment of Galileo but it waited four centuries to do so. A similarly tardy apology was delivered by the Catholic Church in recent years for its involvement in and tacit promotion of the slave trade from Africa to the Americas, beginning in the 16th century, and for its anti-Semitic rhetoric and systematic persecution of the Jews from before the Middle Ages through the Nazi Holocaust of World War II.

Ironically, it was the Islamic reverence for old and new scientific knowledge and philosophical ideas—whether “politically correct” or not—that later conquering European armies discovered in the libraries at Alexandria and Baghdad, ideas which helped start the Renaissance in the West. Islamic advancements in architecture can be seen in the towering cathedrals in Europe that arose after the Christian Crusaders returned from the Holy Land. But these are merely the worldly effects of Islam.

It is Islam’s high spiritual concepts and moral practices that are meant to raise human beings up from their baser learnings towards God Almighty. It is the blessings of the true and deep meanings of the Holy Qur’an and the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that we must cultivate, proclaim, live, and manifest in our daily lives, to present to the world a picture of Islam that will bring people into the faith and not frighten them away from it. The best way to start is by gaining a deeper, philosophical understanding of the name of our religion.

Islam is an Arabic word which means peace, security, obedience and submission. The idea of submission does not mean to follow the commandments blindly, rather it means doing them in a proper way and at the proper time. The purpose of the name “Islam” is that the believer should understand that to achieve true peace with his fellow man and with God, one has to submit himself completely to God. Just as a student can not learn if he is constantly arguing with his teacher, so too must one submit totally to God in order to receive the blessings of God’s Love, Mercy and Guidance. It thus provides peace to the believers, here and in the Hereafter, and provides the foundation for a peaceful Islamic society.

The name “Islam” has been given to this religion by Almighty God Himself. It is written in the Holy Qur’an:

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام

“Surely, the true religion with Almighty God is Islam.” (3:20)

The founders of other religions never gave their names to their religions. Jesus (peace be upon him) never once instructed his followers to call themselves “Christians;” the term was coined by the enemies of Christ in order to identify and persecute his followers. In fact, except for Islam, which was named by God Himself, all other religions are named after their prophets, their races or the lands in which their prophets first came. Islam is also unique in that it embodies within itself a description of what is required of a true believer—complete submission to God—and what the believer then receives in return: complete peace in communion with God.

The name “Islam” creates no personality cult around its Prophet, but acts as a constant reminder that a Muslim is one who strives to be obedient to God at all times, in all circumstances and trials. It is this striving in faith to win the love of God that forges both moral strength and deep spirituality. With these two qualities, a Muslim is blessed by staying close to God and not faltering and falling victim to the temptations of this worldly life.

One of Islam’s great truths is that it is not a new religion, but rather the completion of all previous religions. Much as clothes are tailored to fit a person as he/she grow from childhood to adulthood, so too have the world’s various religions been tailored by God to fit the spiritual development of mankind through the ages as man’s spiritual needs and conditions changed.

Islam does not say other religions are “wrong,” only that Islam is the final religion, the last spiritual “suit of clothes” made by God that will fit every person perfectly. It is because of this Islamic belief that we are commanded to believe in all the prophets of all religions. It is stated in the Holy Qur’an very clearly:

وإِنَّ أُمَّةً إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

“There is no nation but God has given them a Warner.” (35:25)

and:

لكل قوم هاد

“Every nation has been given a Guide.” (13:8)

Islam did not start from Muhammad (peace be upon him), but, rather, from Adam (peace be upon him). We believe that Adam was the first prophet sent by God, not the first human being, and that after him, God sent Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Solomon, David, Moses, and many others who were the prophets of God, peace be upon them all.

We also believe in Jesus as a beloved of God, a Prophet of God, one whose name has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an with all respect and honor more than eighty times. When we Muslims say “a prophet” we mean a very righteous and clean-living human being who was raised up to be a model for us in all respects. Every Muslim believes in Jesus—he is a part of our faith. The Holy Qur'an says:

وأتينا عيسى ابن مريم البينات و آيدناه بروح القدس

“And we gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened him with the spirit of holiness.” (2:88)

We also believe that Mary was a very righteous and pious lady, a model for all women in the world. You will be happy to know that there is a complete chapter named after Mary in the Holy Qur'an.

We consider both Jesus and Mary a Sign from Almighty God. The Holy Qur'an says:

و جعلنا ابن مريم وامه آية

“And we made Son of Mary and his Mother a sign.” (23:51)

Islam is that great religion which encompasses the truth of all other religions. It teaches that all religions, as well as their prophets, must be respected. In Islam, all founders of religions have been shown respected by God Almighty. And while history has shown conclusively how the later followers of prophets have changed the original teachings, this should in no way reflect poorly on the messengers sent by God with pure messages. It is also another Sign in the favor of the truth of Islam

that the Holy Qur'an is unique in the realm of Divine scriptures because its original Arabic text has never been changed by any of its followers, nor by any of its detractors.

Another key element of the beauty of Islamic teachings, which invariably draws the followers of other faiths to it, is that it encompasses the truths of all earlier faiths and does not denigrate these truths in their earlier form or those who cherish them. It is this wide and loving embrace of Islam that allows those from other religions to feel welcomed and included in Islam, oftentimes long before they actually convert to it.

As Muslims, we do not believe that only Jerusalem has been given all the prophets while the rest of the world has never been given any. This would be an unfortunate great sign of discrimination on the part of God. Prophets are the equivalent of spiritual "doctors." How unfair and inhumane it would be for God to only send His "doctors" to heal the spiritual maladies of one group of people, such as the Jews, while letting all other people suffer! Since there can be no conception of an All-Loving God Who would behave in this way, we as Muslims are taught that every nation has been given prophets. We believe that Buddha was a Prophet sent by God, initially to the people of India, and after many there rejected him and drove him away, he and his disciples took God's message to the neighboring Asian countries such as China, Japan, Tibet and Burma.

And also to the Eastern and near-Eastern peoples, we believe that great teachers like Confucius and Lao Tzu and Zoroaster were appointed as messengers of God within their respective lands. Prior to Buddha, we believe, God sent for the people of India the prophets Ram Chandar and Krishna with the teachings of the unity of God. We regard them all as heavenly Teachers, raised to reform man and lead him to God.

Moreover, we also believe there have been some prophets in America, Europe and Africa. We can recognize them from their teachings, heavenly signs and their moral conduct in life. If one studies the Native American Indians, such as the great Sioux leader Crazy Horse, one will read that he received clear visions of the future from the "Great Spirit" and that he was acknowledged even by his white settler opponents to be a courageous, wise and compassionate leader of his people.

Islam is the only religion in the world that has recognized the truth of all the founders of the earlier faiths. The beauty of Islam is that anybody who wishes to come into Islam does so without renouncing any of his own faith's beloved prophets or genuine teachings.

Islam has always addressed the whole of mankind in the Holy Qur'an. God Almighty's blessing have not been given exclusively to any single tribe, race, nation, religion or sect. In Islam, God is not addressed as only the God of the Muslims; rather, He is called

رب العالمين

"Rabbul 'Alameen," which means "Lord of all the worlds."

In like manner, the Holy Prophet's message was not meant just for a particular nation, race or tribe, rather, it was destined to be universal, for all nations and for all the different peoples of the world.

The Quran intones:

قل يأيها الناس إني رسول الله إليكم جميعاً

"Say, 'O mankind! truly I am a Messenger to you all.'" (7:159)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has never been addressed as a messenger sent exclusively to the Arabs or to any other single nation. Instead, as befits the Messenger of a world-wide Guidance, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has been sent as a "mercy" for all mankind, as thus in the Holy Qur'an:

و ما ارسلناك الا رحمة للعالمين

"We have not sent thee, but as a mercy for the whole of mankind." (21:108)

The word "*Rahmat*" has very wide meanings. Besides 'mercy,' it also denotes love, respect, kindness and graciousness. The word "*rahmat*" embodies the promise that through the period described, love, respect and honor will be established throughout the world in the worship of One God.

The Holy Prophet's love was not for any worldly benefit or gain,

but was only for the sake of God. And his love was not for just a few select individuals or groups of people, but his love was for the entire world. What a great person was he, whose love was endless and whose soul yearned for nearness to God. His love shines like a sun on the whole world, from east to west, north to south, and upon black and white, yellow, red and brown. His love was not temporary but was destined to extend across all borders and into all ages.

Islam invites the world to a common foundation of unity, love, brotherhood and peace. Islam removes all kinds of discrimination from society. Islam teaches Muslims to be just even with their enemies, and to be kind even to non-believers, and admonishes them to behave well with all people. Islam is indeed a universal religion for all ages and for all nations.

All Muslims believe in the unity of God and the unity of mankind, because we all are children of God. It is a great beauty of Islam that it accepts the truth of all other religions. All founders of religions were from God Almighty. This concept is unique to Islam.

All Muslims also consider that the Sacred Books of other religions to be from God, with the caveat that there might have been some changes made in them, because we know that man does not generally change himself for the better, but which takes much greater effort, seeks to change the Word of God. This is something readily seen in today's world, where most societies no longer conform to the dictates of their original scriptures, but rather change the teachings to conform to what is the current "norm" or "status quo" in the society.

It is interesting to note that even today in most Islamic countries, as a sign of Muslims' desire to follow God's commandments, women still dress as they did for the past 1400 years because they are so enjoined by God. And in virtually all matters of morality and etiquette, Muslims still conform to the Qur'anic injunctions forbidding drinking, gambling, stealing and adultery. In countries where Muslim populations have become subjected to non-Muslim rule, when crime and moral degradation run wild, they clamor for the restoration of Islamic law.

In northern Nigeria, for instance, where the Muslim majority was suffering from rampant crime and immorality under the secular government, they lobbied and won the right to govern themselves by Islamic law. In no time, crime dropped to almost nothing, and the citizens who had formerly been afraid to go outside at night were now

regularly going to sleep without locking their doors. The peace promised by the name “Islam” was delivered by submitting (again, “Islam”) to the Law of God and following the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

We believe that all Prophets were from God Almighty and that they spoke about the coming of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which would be a fulfillment of prophecies in their own scriptures. We believe that whatever has been said by Moses or has been prophesied by Jesus or others has been fulfilled in the person of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

For example, there are several prophecies about “that Prophet” in the Old Testament and about “the Comforter” in the New Testament that Muslims believe has been fulfilled in favor of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The Holy Qur’an has noted the advent of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in fulfillment of the great prophecies of the Old and New Testament and all other Holy Scriptures.

That is why we say that Islam is not a new religion; rather it is a completion of Judaism and Christianity. Islam is a religion of Love, Peace, Respect, Equality and Brotherhood.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was noted for his loving nature. Indeed, he was love personified. He said:

“أَلْحَبُّ أَسَاسِي”

“Alhubbu Asasi.”

“My Movement is based on Love.”

He advised us to love our friends and relatives; that is natural and expected. But even more than that, he said that we should love our enemies, so much so that they become our warm friends.

فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“And lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity will become as though he were a warm friend.” (41:35)

He taught us how to love, and showed us how hatred can be changed into love with several examples of his love and kindness.

Holy Qur'an says:

“ولا تستوي الحسنة ولا السيئة إِدْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ”

“Good and Evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is best.” (41:35)

He also stated:

“المسلم من سلم المسلمون من يده ولسانه”

“The perfect Muslim is he from whose hand and tongue, all Muslims are safe.”

Jihad

The word Jihad is being misused everywhere especially by the media. Jihad is the Arabic word which means “struggle.” The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) described three kinds of Jihad.

The Greatest Jihad: to fight against ones own evil wishes.

The Great Jihad: to spread peace in the world through the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

The Lesser Jihad: in a war fought in self-defense only, with many other conditions.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“أذن للذين يقاتلون بأنهم ظلموا وإن الله على نصرهم لقدير”

“Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged. And Allah indeed has power to help them.” (22:40)

The word “أذن” “Uzina,” means ‘permitted.’ And المذنبين يقاتلون means ‘those who have been attacked.’ “Alladhina Yuqataluna” means ‘against whom the sword has already been used.’ The second condition is: “بأنهم ظلموا” “Bi Annahum Zulimu” means ‘they have been persecuted, too.’

Under Islamic law, Muslims have been allowed to fight only in self-defense. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) never attacked anyone, nor killed, or provoked anyone, but he and his

companions always were the target of attack. He never taught his followers to kill anybody without adequate reason. God's teaching in the Holy Qur'an is:

لا إكراه في الدين

“There is no compulsion in religion.” (2:257)

Even when war was permitted in self-defense, it was not a “green light” to them, giving them the right to do whatever they wanted. In time of armed conflict there were many, many conditions and prohibitions imposed upon the Muslims—so much so that they were often at a disadvantage in battle, compared with how their opponents were allowed to behave by their rules of conduct in war. The Geneva Convention rules of fair conduct in war and kind treatment of prisoners was created only in the 20th century. The Muslims were obeying even more stringent conditions of fair conduct and kind treatment of their prisoners 1400 years before the advent of our Western ‘civilized’ codes of conduct in war.

The famous novelist James A. Michener writes about the lasting influence of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in his Readers Digest article of 1955, “Islam: the Misunderstood Religion.” In it, Michener writes:

“As a successful general, Muhammad left many traditions regarding decent conduct in war. Muhammad taught his followers, saying: ‘Faithfully carry out all covenants and agreements. Avoid treachery and do not disfigure the enemy dead. Do not slay children, women, old men, and persons dedicated to the service of religion. Do not destroy sacred objects, orchards, or crops.’”

Michener also points out, in relation to the rapid spread of Islam, that:

“The west has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts that idea, and the Qur'an is explicit in support of freedom of conscience.”

He further noted that:

“... ‘Followers of the book’ were usually given decent treatment, sanctuary and freedom to worship as they wished.”

Islam is inherently and fundamentally committed to peace. It affirms and creates a society where people can live in peace with one another and with themselves because they shared a common bond of peace in submission to their Lord and Maker. More people than ever before are choosing to become Muslim because they find in Islam the peace they’ve always wanted in their lives—peace of every kind: peace of mind, rational satisfaction, divine love, spiritual equality and a genuine sense of community and social brotherhood.

Islam delivers to those who seek its blessings and surrender themselves to God, true peace with God, peace in society, and peace in family life. Islam successfully establishes a crime-and-drug-free society where all citizens are protected from harm, and where parents are given full respect by their children, and where children are given all love from their parents. Islam instructs parents to also take care of their aging parents, so that in Muslim households it’s very common to see three and four generations all living under the same roof. This type of family cohesiveness has become a lost thing in the West, with a corresponding erosion of family stability and moral values.

Marriages, too, are very successful. Wife and husband come together in a sacred union incorporating respect, peace and love, where they are each given duties and responsibilities and find fulfillment in life by meeting those responsibilities. In Islam, spouses are described as a “garment” for each other, so that by their mutual love, respect and care for each other, they can enjoy their lives together in the worship and service of God. Married life in Islam is meant to create a heaven on earth for the husband, wife and their children. It is stated in the Holy Qur’an:

وَلَمَن خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٍ

“And for him who fears to stand before his Lord, there are two paradises.” (55:47)

According to Islam, that heavenly life starts from this very life and the other begins in the Hereafter. How can one expect a paradise in the Hereafter when he has not seen the heavenly life in this world? We are given to understand that the heavenly life starts in this very world, and

we are taught to strive to make our lives worthy of being granted the heavenly life in the Hereafter. A true and devout believer's heaven lies in winning the pleasure of his Lord and in serving his fellow man, in doing good works and in spreading peace. This is why Muslims are by and large peace-loving people.

Peace with God

Islam gives the glad tidings of nearness to God, where the supplicant can be blessed to have God speak to him. A true believer who surrenders completely to God, or who braves severe trials and seeks God's Mercy, often experiences true dreams, visions, audible communications and sometimes even revelations. We believe this is possible because God's Divine Attributes are always in effect and can never be discontinued. We firmly believe that God speaks to His servants today as He used to speak to them before. And we do not believe that God can ever forsake or forget us in our times of hardship and need. What then would be the purpose of prayer if God never listened or never gave us any response to our cries?

Peace in the society

To make this a reality, one of the first commandments given with regard to worldly affairs is to be loyal to one's country. Wherever you live you have to be loyal to your country of residence. Otherwise, you should leave that country and go somewhere else, a place where you feel peace of mind and satisfaction. Violent civil unrest has never been permitted by Islam.

Muslims must always be law-abiding citizens. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

حب الوطن من الايمان

“To love your country is a part of your Faith.”

If every citizen loves his country and remains loyal and law-abiding, then certainly there will be peace everywhere. Conversely, it is the duty of the government to be responsive to the needs of its citizens and to treat them with respect and justice. All instances of civil unrest can be traced to either the oppression or unfair treatment of various people by their government or by other entities, such as corporations,

which go unpunished by the government when they exploit their consumers or their workers. In America, the actions of Enron are a prime example of this abuse of power. Islam requires all those in power to be held accountable for their misdeeds.

The Need for Equality, Love & Brotherhood

Most of the problems which the world faces today are due to lack of justice, equality and love. All manner of unrest occurring in the world are rooted in the lack of these three things.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) realized this truth and because he and his followers routinely suffered at the hands of the Meccans and others, he was especially keen on the promotion of these qualities when he had the governmental authority to do so. Note the words he used at his Farewell address before a hundred thousand people, at the site of the pilgrimage:

“O men! What I say to you, you must hear and remember... All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal. Even as the fingers of two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right or superiority to claim over another. All of you are as brothers.”

For absolute love to prevail, equality is a must. If somebody considers himself superior to others and looks down upon them, there will be enmity between them, never love. That's why the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) further said:

“The Arabs have no superiority over the non-Arabs, neither the red has over the black, nor the black over red, except through piety.”

He also announced:

“You are as brothers, one to another. So let no one transgress against another.”

What great teachings were given by Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), when he said:

لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يحب لأخيه ما يحب لنفسه

“None of you can be a true believer until and unless he desires for his brother what he wishes for himself.”

He advised that there always be just one standard by which to measure and deal with people, not two or three. Throughout history, in whatever language spoken, there has usually been a term for a “double-standard” that is clear in its meaning to all speakers of that language.

Peace in the Neighborhood

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has put much emphasis on the rights of neighbors. He said:

ما زال جبريل يوصيني بالجار حتى ظننت أنه سيورثه

“The Angel Gabriel kept advising me so repeatedly, in the favor of the neighbor, that I thought he might be giving him the right of inheritance.”

The Muslim Greeting

The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), when he met the Angels of God, said: “*سلام عليكم* Salamu Alaikum” which means “peace be unto you.” And Jesus (peace be upon him) also, when he met his disciples, addressed them, “Peace be unto you.” (Luke 24:36)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave us the greeting of:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

“Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatohu.”

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) added “Rahmatullahi wa Barakatohu,” which means “Peace be unto you and His Mercy and Blessings also be upon you.”

All Muslims have been advised by him to spread “Salam” (the Islamic Greetings). In his words:

وافشوا السلام بينكم

“And spread Salam among yourselves.”

When a Muslim says “Assalamu Alaikum” to his fellow being, it

means that he assures him of “all peace” from his side. Thus the message of peace is being spread all over the world.

This is yet another proof that Islam is a religion of peace and love, and has nothing to do with any kind of terrorism or hatred against others.

The Holy Qur'an has condemned all kinds of terrorism, saying:

أَلْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدَّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

“...For terrorism is worse than killing.” (2:192)

أَلْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ

“...For terrorism is more than killing.” (2:218)

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ

“And fight with them until there is no terrorism/persecution and religion is freely professed for Allah.”

فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عَدَاوَةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْظَالِمِينَ

“But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed, except against the aggressors.” (2:194)

If some religious or political leaders from among the Muslims use the name of Islam to justify their worldly or military actions, then such actions can never be considered a “struggle” in defense of the religion. It is only a struggle for what is being sought. Muslims collectively are peace-loving people. They believe in peace and harmony. Their slogan is

“Love for All – Hatred for None”.

Their way of life is to:

“Live with peace”

“Spread Peace”

“Struggle for Peace” and

“Pray for Peace”

Muslims' hearts are full of love. They wish to be closer to others and help in solving the problems and disputes of the world. They work

for unity. People should be sharing their commonalities, rather than bruited their differences. Those commonalities are what will build the bridges of peace upon which we can all greet one another with "Peace!"

There is one God and one goal. Although there are different religions there are so many things that are common to them that it is truly an unnecessary tragedy when we choose to divide ourselves by emphasizing our differences, instead of seeking harmony and understanding based on our common humanity. Today, more than ever, we need consensus, not fences.

It is high time for mankind to be united, as it is the design of God Almighty, prophesied in the Holy Scriptures, to gather together all people in the latter days. Let us match our steps with the steps of God, so we may be rewarded. Certainly, the day is not very far when the whole world will be like heaven, with love, equality, and brotherhood among all. As it has been predicted by Moses, Jesus, the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and many others, there will be peace all over the world.

Let us pray to Almighty God that the Love which had been brought by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by all Prophets and Saints of God be established throughout the whole world. May we all strive to love and respect each other, and may the whole world become a heavenly abode of peace and brotherhood for all. Amin.

Contributing to the Muslim Sunrise

Literary Contributions: We prefer to receive articles, comments, etc., on a computer disk. Typed manuscripts are also welcome. Mailing address is, The Editor, The Muslim Sunrise, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring MD 20905
e-mail: syedsajidahmad@yahoo.com

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Muslims and Jesus

David Foutz (Letters, Feb 27) rightfully believes Jesus as the Messiah for all including Muslims but neglects to note that he is advocating the messiah as proposed by Paul.

Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, agrees with the virgin birth but neither does it consider man born sinner nor does it take the virgin birth of Jesus ('Isa in Qur'an) as the source of the innocence of Jesus. Qur'an categorically denies the sonship of Jesus and the concept of trinity. Qur'an presents Jesus as a righteous prophet of God for reformation of Jews.

As to the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus, diverse ideas exist among Muslims. Many Muslims believe that Jesus was replaced by a look-alike before crucifixion and the look-alike was crucified. Yet, many other Muslims believe that Jesus was saved from the cross and was taken off the earth.

The Ahmadi Muslims believe that Jesus was saved from the death on the cross. He traveled east to preach the ten tribes of Israel scattered there. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), founder of the Ahmadiyya Community, claimed to have identified the grave of Jesus in Kashmir and presented evidence in support of his claims in his book, Jesus in India.

Syed Sajid Ahmad, Boise

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Ahmadiyya Muslim Contacts in the US

National Headquarters: Bait-ur-Rahman Mosque

15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring MD 20905 (301) 879-0110

Arizona: Tucson

Yousuf Mosque

250 West Speedway, Tucson AZ 8570

(520) 624-4100 or (520) 884-8964

California: Los Angeles

Bait-ul-Hameed Mosque

11941 Ramona Avenue, Chino CA 91710

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California: San Francisco

520 Pacifica Avenue, Pittsburg CA 94565

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(408) 941-0400

District of Columbia:

Washington, American Fazal Mosque

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Washington DC 20008 (202) 232-3737

Florida: Miami, Bait-un-Naseer

6841 SW 185 Way, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33332

(305) 680-0228

Illinois: Chicago, Sadiq Mosque

4448 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago IL 60653

(773) 268-8281

Illinois: Chicago

2134-36 N. Van Buren Avenue,

Chicago IL 60612 (312) 226-0500

Illinois: Chicago

25510 Route 53, Glen Ellyn IL 60137

(708) 790-0804

Illinois: Zion

2103 Gabriel Street, Zion IL 60099

(312) 746-5585

Louisiana: New Orleans

3817 Calarado Avenue, Kenner LA 70065

(504) 464-9837

Maryland: Baltimore

4406 Garrison Boulevard,

Baltimore MD 21215 (410) 664-2747

Maryland: Silver Spring

Bait-ur-Rahman Mosque

15000 Good Hope Road,

Silver Spring MD 20905 (301) 879-0110

Massachusetts: Boston

4 Nasir Ahmad Road, Sharon MA 02067

781 784 9574

Michigan: Detroit, Baitul-Muzaffar

8218 Wyoming Street, Detroit MI 48204

(313) 933-9850

Missouri: St. Louis, Sadiq Mosque

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New Jersey: North Jersey, Bait-ul-Wahid

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New Jersey: Old Bridge, Bait-ul-Hadi

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Milwaukee WI 53216

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Conditions of *Bai'at* (Initiation)

in The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

by *Hadrat* Mirza Ghulām Ahmad of Qādiān

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

The initiate shall solemnly promise:

I. That he/she shall abstain from *Shirk* (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.

II. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they may be.

III. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajjud (pre-dawn supererogatory Prayers) and invoking *Darūd* (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.

IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.

V. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trials; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the contrary, he/she shall march forward.

VI. That he/she shall refrain from following un-Islamic customs and lustful inclinations; and shall completely submit himself/herself to the authority of the Holy Qur'an; and shall make the Word of God and the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) the guiding principles in every walk of his/her life.

VII. That he/she shall entirely give up pride and vanity and shall pass all his/her life in humbleness, cheerfulness, forbearance and meekness.

VIII. That he/she shall hold faith, the honor of faith, and the cause of Islam dearer to him/her than his/her life, wealth, honor, children and all other dear ones.

IX. That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only; and shall endeavor to benefit mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers.

X. That he/she shall enter into a bond of brotherhood with this humble servant of God, pledging obedience to me in everything good, for the sake of Allah, and remain faithful to it till the day of his/her death; that he/she shall exert such a high devotion in the observance of this bond as is not to be found in any other worldly relationship and connection demanding devoted dutifulness.

(Translated from *Ishtihār Takmil-i-Tabligh*, January 12, 1889)